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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: A PRIMER: PAKISTAN'S SENATE ELECTIONS

11. (SBU) Summary: On or about March 9, Pakistan will hold indirect elections to replace 50 (of 100) members, whose terms expire this year. The process, controlled by the Election Commission, is governed by a complicated proportional system in which members of the National and the four Provincial Assemblies vote by secret ballot on candidates selected by party leaders. There is no direct election of senators. The Provincial Assemblies decide the majority of seats, so the outcome of the election is expected to reflect the current balance of power in the provinces. Currently, the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) are controlled by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led coalition; Punjab is under the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Political commentators, therefore, expect the PPP and the PML-N to increase their seats; Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and its religious party allies (which control the current Senate) are expected to lose seats.

12. (SBU) Also scheduled for March 9 is a nationwide lawyers' demonstration, with the participation of PML-N and the religious Jamaat Islami (JI) party; whether this street protest will have any real effect on the outcome of the indirect Senate elections is doubtful. After the Senate elections, the PPP and its coalition partners should be in a strong enough position to enact constitutional reforms, which require a two-thirds majority in both the National Assembly and the Senate. End Summary.

Pakistan's Senate: Party Big Wigs
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13. (SBU) Pakistan's Senate was designed to be a force for governmental continuity and stability. Unlike the National Assembly -- the lower house that defines the country's parliamentary system -- the Senate cannot be constitutionally dissolved, and only half of its 100 senators are up for election at a time. Senators serve six-year terms, and their indirect election is held within 30 days prior to the conclusion of the term. The upper house, however, is more a bulwark of Pakistan's political parties than any chamber of elder statesmen. Most senators are financial contributors to and/or high-level advisors in the parties; several are close relatives or friends of party leaders.

14. (SBU) Constitutionally, senators are indirectly elected, most by the Provincial Assemblies, but, in reality, party leaders hand-select their slate of candidates. Members of the assemblies can be expected to vote as their respective party leaders have instructed, even though the vote is by

secret ballot. Party negotiations, leading up to the actual poll, will still take place. Reportedly, parties will offer financial incentives, promise works projects, and exchange ministries and chairmanships for senate seats to ensure party unity, lure other parties' dissidents, and sway the smaller parties.

Nuts & Bolts
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15. (SBU) Election Commission Secretary Kunwar Dilshad recently told Ambassador that this year's senatorial election, for those 50 seats last filled in 2003, will be held on/about March 9. National and Provincial Assembly members go to vote on the same day at their respective bodies in the federal and provincial capitals. Of the 50 Senate seats up for grabs, 28 "general" members will be elected by the four Provincial Assemblies, 7 by each. The Provincial Assemblies will each also elect two female senators and two technocrat/ulema senators. Four "independent" senators from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are selected by the FATA parliamentarians in the National Assembly, and all National Assembly parliamentarians will choose one "general" and one "reserved" (this election cycle, a female) senator to represent the Islamabad capital district.

16. (SBU) The current Senate, all of whose members were elected during the Musharraf era, reflects the old balance of power. A greater number of senators from the Pakistan Muslim League (PML, 17) will be up for re-election than from the now ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP, 5) or leading opposition

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Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N, 3). In addition, the former Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition of religious parties, including now PPP partner Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) as well as opposition Jamaat Islami (JI), is over-represented in today's Senate, with eight seats in jeopardy. With this election, the Senate balance is expected to tilt in the PPP's and PML-N's favor, though not entirely, because only half the body will change over. The election results should reflect the proportional balance of power in the provinces. Currently the PPP and its coalition allies rule in Sindh, Balochistan, and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP); the PML-N rules (in a coalition with the PPP) in the largest province of Punjab.

17. (SBU) The following chart lists the current number of seats held by each party (totaling 100) and how many of those seats are up for election (totaling 50).

Party : Number of Current Senate Seats : Number of Seats Up
For Election

Awami National Party	: 2	: 1
Baloch National Party-Awami	: 1	: 1
Baloch National Party-Mengal	: 1	: 0
National Alliance	: 1	: 1
Independents (including 4 from FATA)	: 9	: 7
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	: 19	: 8
Muttahida Quami Movement	: 6	: 3
Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party	: 3	: 2
Pakistan Muslim League	: 40	: 17
Pakistan Muslim League-Functional	: 1	: 0
Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz	: 4	: 3
Pakistan People's Party	: 10	: 5
Pakistan People's Party-Sherpao	: 3	: 2

18. (SBU) The Constitution requires all federal ministers to be serving parliamentarians. Current Advisor to the Ministry of Interior Rehman Malik will likely be elected as a senator and thus adopt the formal title of minister. It is not yet clear if Advisor to the Ministry of Finance Shaukat Tareen will also run. Long-time PPP senators, including Enver Baig, who were close to Benazir Bhutto, may lose out in the party shuffle as President Asif Zardari moves to consolidate

control of the PPP party structure. PML's Chaudhry Shujaat, who lost in February's National Assembly elections, will top the PML list to become a senator.

[19](#). (SBU) Comment: If the commentators are proven right, the new Senate will be dominated by the PPP and should allow the government to proceed with proposed constitutional reforms, which requires a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament.

PATTERSON